

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC)
Lake Okeechobee Committee (Committee) Meeting
Indian River Community College, Chastain Campus
Wolf High Technology Center Auditorium
2400 S.E. Salerno Road, Stuart, FL
Wednesday, November 30, 2005
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon**

Lake Okeechobee Operations Public Workshop – 1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Governing Board Member: Lennart Lindahl

Attending – Committee Member

Doug Bournique	Kevin Henderson	Ray Scott
Susan Brookman	David Lithgow	Kim Shugar
Bob Butler	Frank Marsocci	Craig Tepper (for Jack Smith)
Joe Collins	Mary Ann Martin	Jody Thomas
Michael DiTerlizzi	Barbara Miedema	Ken Todd
Richard Earp	Roland Ottolini (for Jim Lavender)	Malcolm "Bubba" Wade
Beverly Grady		
Paul Gray	Judy Sanchez	

Absent: Dennis Duke, Gene Duncan, Don Fox, David Hazellief, Barry Rosen, and Jack Smith.

WRAC Members: Walter Carson, Patrick Hayes

Staff:

Missie Barletto	Damon Meiers	Karen Smith
Susan Gray	Sarah Nall	Rick Smith
Peter Kwiatkowski	Cal Neidrauer	Benita Whalen
Sally McPherson	Beth Ross	

1. Welcome and Introductions by Lennart Lindahl, Chair.

Meeting called to order at 9:15 a.m. Chair Lindahl welcomed everyone to the meeting and to the Martin / St. Lucie County area. The impacts from recent hurricanes and storms to the estuaries were discussed. He thanked the Committee members for addressing the serious issues affecting Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries, and for the time that has been committed to work on Lake Okeechobee matters.

2. Member Issues:

Paul Gray, Audubon of Florida: The defects to the system were shown by the recent hurricanes. The problems need to be addressed.

Martin Ann Martin, Roland Martin Marina: The devastating affects caused by the hurricanes were discussed. The storms have occurred very severely to the areas around the towns of Okeechobee, Pahokee, and Belle Glade. The marina suffered severe damage. Recommendations can be made to improve the quality of water resources in the area.

Joe Collins, Lykes Brothers: Hurricanes are impacting the areas and he provided information on citrus damage and cattle problems. The rain is continuing and all the water has caused significant impairment. The end of hurricane season is something to celebrate.

Doug Bournique, Indian River Citrus League: The impact of Hurricane Wilma to the region on lost citrus production has been ruinous to the industry. Economically it has been very bad. Chair Lindahl provided information on the Citrus Industry and he stated that Mr. Bournique has been a great asset to that industry.

Jody Thomas, The Nature Conservancy: The connectivity of the whole water system is an issue that needs to be addressed further. Retaining the flexibility is important.

Ray Scott, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: Alternative Water Supply funding for agricultural projects is important. These types of projects are very important considering the amount of water the agricultural industry uses. Storing water on private lands, agricultural lands for water storage, and other issues are being worked on with SFWMD staff. Agricultural projects should be an ongoing part of the alternative water supply projects.

Barbara Miedema, Sugar Cane Growers Co-Op: There has been significant damage to the sugar industry due to the storms. There has been reduction in all aspects of sugar production. The amount of the loss is yet to be determined and some type of recovery later in the season will determine the total amount of damage. The industry supports management techniques for Lake Okeechobee. A Technical Sub-Committee on water constraints needs to be presented to this committee. Abnormally high rainfall has badly affected the areas.

Kim Shugar, Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Restoration of the entire ecosystems is needed.

Craig Tepper, Seminole Tribe of Florida: He provided information on water storage facilities, capacity of surface water to those places, older flood control systems, moving water to and from Lake Okeechobee, and other issues that will affect what needs to be addressed to improve the Lake.

Richard Earp, Osceola County: His County was spared this year from the affects of Hurricane Wilma by just ten miles and avoided devastation. An Executive Director has been hired to spend \$60 million for flood storage and protection in his county. He thanked the Governing Board for holding these meeting. He and other staff in Osceola County are looking for ways to improve the current system.

Frank Marsocci, Lake Okeechobee Small Business Owners: The fisheries in and around Lake Okeechobee were in bad shape before Hurricane Wilma came, and the tourist industry was struggling before any of the hurricanes. His business is off 69% from figures last year and there needs to be some improvement.

Kevin Henderson, St. Lucie River Initiative, The Rivers Coalition: The water quality has declined in the estuaries since Hurricane Wilma. Water is too dirty to fish in around his area. Any opportunity to adjust and close off options is required. The Legislature was directed years ago to take action on the problems and this has never been done.

Patrick Hayes, Martin County Soil and Water Conservation and WRAC Member: Everyone in Martin and St. Lucie Counties are concerned about the estuaries. Tourism has been severely affected. The citrus industry has taken significant hits. There is a huge problem here. Considering the amount of rainfall, how much more in discharges can the estuaries sustain? The estuaries have been closed by the Board of Health and they are hurting. Lake management operations are very important.

Susan Brookman, Southwest Florida Watershed Council: Lake Okeechobee management and estuary management are of concern to everyone. The estuarine health issue and differences of opinion have been brought up and the Southwest Watershed Council will work with others to achieve a solution. She appreciates the opportunity to be on this committee and learn of issues. Innovative land use planning is very important.

Bob Butler, Butler Dairy Farm: Dairy has taken a real public hit for causing damage to the Lake, but agriculture is only a very small part of the problem. Alternative water sources and retention of water on farms were discussed. Agriculture will be losing production. The Department of Agriculture has been helping and they have some good ideas. He challenged everyone to see how fast drainage is affecting the estuaries. Protection of both salt and fresh water is important and more needs to be done. He stated his appreciation for having the opportunity to be on this Committee and he thanked the SFWMD for the help it has provided to the area.

David Lithgow, United Waterfowlers, Inc.: The waterfowl migration is doing very well, and increased waterfowl numbers are being seen all over South Florida. Cleaner water coming in from the north and west has contributed to the large number of birds. He asked for a staff update on the structures south of the Lake and he said downstream conveyance is being worked on to be cleaned up.

Bubba Wade, U. S. Sugar Corp. and SFWMD Governing Board Member: He reported on U. S. Sugar problems, large citrus losses. Over 6,000 acres of trees have been plowed under, and there are other significant problems. He reported on structural damage in 2/3 of the sugar warehouses; train car damage; 210 employees that are homeless; and the extensive crop damage. The crop damage and the subsequent affects to the sugar industry were discussed. He spoke of the flood issues related to Lake Okeechobee. Landowners in the EAA and around the Lake are the same as all other landowners and temporary flooding will take them out of business and they cannot afford that – it would put them all out of business. Every single acre needs to be harvested. This (flooding of land) is not a viable temporary solution to the problems. The EAA is not responsible for all the problems to the Lake and that will be shown when the technical report comes out. This is not a significant contributor to the damage that has occurred to the Lake. Flooding the EAA is not technically sound and Mr. Wade explained why this is not a feasible approach and why this would not work.

Ms. Miedema agreed with the comments by Mr. Wade. A tremendous amount of acres have been taken out of production, and they contribute money (taxes) for solutions. Shared diversity is being done by the sugar industry. The sugar industry is committed to improving conditions. There has been a significant economic and productions hit by the agricultural industry to provide improvements to water quality. The benefits by agriculture were listed.

Mike DiTerlizzi, Martin County Commissioner: He is representing the constituents of Martin County. The area has been significantly impacted by the problems in Lake Okeechobee. The solutions need to occur as soon as possible. He provided the history of Martin County in helping to solve water quality problems. Over \$20 million tax dollars have been invested. Another \$20 million is scheduled to be spent on projects. He urged other communities and local governments to participate in restoring the water quality. Cleaner water and lower Lake levels are needed.

Beverly Grady, WRAC representative from the West Coast: She reported on the purchase of the Babcock Ranch. Lee County held a workshop on water quality and she spoke of the devastation that has occurred to the estuaries. Several meetings that have been held (commission meetings, a Lee County Workshop, and SFWMD Governing Board meetings) on storage in the EAA (not flooding. This is an issue she would like to see explored. Shared adversity is another important issue to be discussed by this Committee. Reservoirs and Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) for water storage is an issue she would like to see further explored.

Ken Todd, Palm Beach County Water Resources: A component of the ultimate solution is water storage. He requested the group to look at innovative ways to store water. This will be the biggest bang for the buck. He requested an update on new water storage areas at every other meeting. Mr. Todd stated that this would help the frustration issue.

Roland Ottolini, Lee County Public Works: Lee County is looking at any opportunity to find temporary land for water storage. Immediate relief is needed. Topics covered were CERP, implied discharges, viable routes for flow to travel, and solutions that need to be reached. Money is an issue. They want to be part of the solution and need answers.

Judy Sanchez, U. S. Sugar Corporation: She agreed with Mr. Wade's comments. Storage of water across land, technical issues, working to fix the whole system, projects need to get off the ground, and the focus needs to be on the entire system and not one area.

Walter Carson, WRAC member: He is the chair of the WRAC Stormwater Management Task Force Group. The water quality issues in the Lake and downstream from the Lake are significantly impacted by developments around the Lake. The development of *Best Management Practices (BMPs)* for urban and residential developments is being reviewed. He wants to coordinate with this Committee on those efforts. He asked if the Lake Okeechobee Committee or the Stormwater Management Task Force Group would handle the stormwater management issues. How to facilitate the subject was requested and he asked for input from the members. He wants to coordinate the activities so there is not duplication of efforts.

Chair Lindahl said the appropriate way would be for a report to be given to the Lake Okeechobee Committee by the Stormwater Management group on an "as needed" basis.

Mr. Scott asked about the agricultural BMP program and Mr. Carson provided information on BMP development. Dr. Paul Gray spoke of revisiting other issues and Mr. Carson said environmental permitting issues would be coordinated with how the SFWMD wanted to deal with permitting matters. Chair Lindahl provided information and said some potential rule changes may occur.

Chair Lindahl said positive debate and exchanges to come up with some solutions is what the Governing Board is looking for. There is no "one solution", but there will be several solutions. There is no need for a legacy for reports to gather dust on a shelf, and action must be taken. He thanked the Committee members for their commitment to the issues.

Chair Lindahl said there is a workshop on Lake Okeechobee operations immediately following this Committee meeting and he urged everyone to attend.

3. Lake Okeechobee Systems Operations and Vegetation Removal Update by Bob Howard, Director, Operations Control and Vegetation Management Department, and Dan Thayer, Director, Division of Vegetation Management, SFWMD.

Calvin Neidrauer, Chief Consulting Engineer, Operations Control and Vegetation Management Department, SFWMD, provided information on this item as Mr. Howard was unable to attend.

The water conditions summary, including information on rainfall, hurricane damage, situation reports, current operations, state & regulatory discharge history & projection, lake stages following Hurricane Wilma and the Lake's maximum October & November stage. Information on the extensive debris removal that has occurred since Hurricane Wilma was provided.

Beth Carlson, representing the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, provided a status update on the USACOE's debris removal program.

Roland Ottolini asked and Mr. Neidrauer responded to questions on issues involving backpumping; Chain of Lakes restoration target water level and storage; and water conservation area water levels and storage. Rick Smith reported on the Kissimmee River Water Supply Plan efforts and an update will be given to this committee and the full WRAC in January.

Jody Thomas asked about modeling and the lake's operation schedule. Mr. Neidrauer reported on interim schedules.

Paul Gray reported on the Kissimmee River Revitalization group and future projects for water storage. This is on the horizon and it needs to keep going.

4. Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Restoration Plan Update by Susan Gray, Director, Lake Okeechobee Division, SFWMD.

Dr. Susan Gray provided an overview of the estuary restoration program. We are in a wet cycle and issues are being captured. This is a multi-agency action and the SFWMD is partnering with several governmental agencies. The Governor and SFWMD Governing Board are very involved in this matter. At the January Governing Board meeting a report will be given on draft plan.

Measurable improvements to the health of Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries are the goal of the plan. This is a bold plan. A series of capital projects will be initiated. The primary benefits were outlined.

A summary of the key components of the plan was provided. The five construction projects north of Lake Okeechobee were discussed.

The revised Lake Okeechobee Regulation schedule was reviewed. By working with the USACOE, this will achieve a better balance among lake management solutions. Information on the TMDLs for Lake Okeechobee tributaries was given, along with mandatory fertilizer BMPs. The Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) criteria process includes the Kissimmee River, as well as all the estuaries. Information on alternative storage and disposal of excess surface water was provided. Land Use Planning was discussed. Elimination of Land Applications of Residuals was another topic presented.

The continued implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Protection Program (LOPP) & CERP & Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project (LOWP) was discussed.

The plan benefits are to expand water storage, facilitate land acquisition, and enhance Lake health. Governor Bush is very involved in this issue and is very concerned with all the issues.

Public Comment:

Wayne Nelson, representing Executive Director of Fisherman Against the Destruction of the Environment (FADE), provided comment on the condition of Lake Okeechobee and Lake water levels. He spoke of several issues, including a videotape, a letter from Col. Carpenter to Nat Reed and the response of Mr. Reed.

Mr. Wade provided information on the comments made by Mr. Nelson. Information on the stabilization of the levee around Lake Okeechobee was given and a report will be available from George Horne, Deputy Executive Director, Operations and Maintenance, SFWMD is charged with this project. A report is expected in January 2006.

John Sprague, representing the Marine Industries Association of Florida, provided comment on navigation concerns. His group wants to get more and more involved in the issues related to Lake Okeechobee. Route 1 and Route 2 waterways and who will be responsible for their maintenance is of concern to him. This group is in a public/private partnership with the City of Pahokee.

Chair Lindahl provided information on the revisiting of the schedule and said his organization needs to be involved in this matter. Marine industry participation has been very good in the past, and they should get involved now.

Return to Presentation:

Mr. Ottolini spoke to Dr. Susan Gray on estuary recovery and reductions in nitrogen and he said that there needs to be tracking. Dr. Susan Gray said this is done and she provided information on phosphorus.

Jody Thomas asked for the contact for DCA and Kim Shugar provided information. Projects targeted for land acquisition were discussed.

Frank Marsocci spoke of the three projects north of the Lake and the S-133, S-154 projects, and asked about the range of percentage for reduction in phosphorus. Mr. Marsocci said there is a long way to go regarding the phosphorus loading north of the Lake. Dr. Susan Gray provided information on these issues. Impacts from stormwater runoff were discussed and this may be a future agenda topic. Mr. Wade provided information on stormwater treatment areas. Mr. Lithgow reported on cattails in the levees.

Mr. Lithgow asked about ASRs and surface water components. Federal funding on pilot wells was discussed by Mr. Lithgow, Mr. Wade, Chair Lindahl and Mr. Smith. The SFWMD website provides information on ASRs.

Mr. Hayes spoke on volume and quality of water, growth management, development needs, management of wetlands, and he acknowledged Dr. Susan Gray's work. Information on the watershed was provided.

Ms. Brookman said the future of land use plans and she would like to see innovative land use plans. She offered the Southwest Watershed Council to hold discussions on land use plans. The work that is being done by the USACOE needs to be shared with this group.

5. Lake Okeechobee Inflow/Outflow and Phosphorous Concentration Charts by Calvin Neidrauer, Chief Consulting Engineer, Operations Control and Vegetation Management Department, SFWMD.

Mr. Neidrauer presented information on this issue. This was not information on a water budget. Several charts and graphs were shown with information on Lake Okeechobee net inflow and regulatory discharges. Information was given on the wet season net inflow, and phosphorus surface loads to Lake Okeechobee. Additional charts showed the phosphorus surface loads from the Lake and phosphorus concentrations of surface inflows to the Lake.

Mr. Henderson asked about data provided and he asked for clarification on the discharges of the southern outlets to tide. Mr. Neidrauer provided information and explanation of the Lake regulation study.

Public Comment:

Herb Zebuth, representing the Friends of the Everglades, provided comment on the problems on the Lake. Issues covered were BMPs, the Lake Okeechobee Basin, the Clean Water Act, success levels, programs needed for specific levels and mandatory punishments. This will lead to improvements in the Lake. A lower Lake regulation schedule is supported. The focus on demands should be away from the Lake. Forward pumps will drive the Lake levels lower.

Return to Presentation:

Frank Marsocci asked about the Lake Okeechobee net inflow and regulatory discharges and said something has to be done in the new schedule and be more pro-active in the wet years to move the water out.

Beverly Grady spoke on the quantifications and cfs; and CERP surface water projects. Mr. Neidrauer provided information on these matters.

Dr. Paul Gray provided comment on outflows, watershed saturation; system is more phosphorus sensitive, the trouble that will be caused in the future by the saturation.

Announcement:

Chair Lindahl asked the Committee if the next meeting of the WRAC Lake Okeechobee Committee could be held on January 25, 2006 in Ft. Myers instead of the scheduled meeting location of Ft. Pierce. There were no objections. There will be a future meeting scheduled for Ft. Pierce.

Lunch Break 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

LAKE OKEECHOBEE OPERATIONS
PUBLIC WORKSHOP AGENDA: 1:00 – 5:30 p.m.

1. Introduction and Overview of Workshop by Susan Gray, Director, Lake Okeechobee Division, SFWMD.

Chair Lindahl called the meeting called to order at 1:15 p.m.

Dr. Susan Gray provided information on the presentations that would be heard today. All parties are welcome to make comments and suggestions. Presenters today are from the SFWMD and the USACOE. A copy of all presentations will be posted to the District's Lake Okeechobee website.

2. Technical Summaries:

- Climatic and Regional Hydrologic Conditions/Operations for the last six months by Cal Neidrauer, SFWMD; Susan Sylvester, Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Neidrauer presented information on this issue. There was a record-setting Atlantic hurricane season from June 1 through November 30, 2005. The 2005 wet season rainfall influenced heavily by tropical storms. During the 2005 wet season Lake Okeechobee stages were very high. Current operations were explained. The regulatory discharge summary was discussed. The water conservation areas current operations were reviewed. The SDCS Operations for the WCA-3A releases to the L-31N detention areas was explained.

The climate outlook calls for increased chances of below normal rainfall for December. The future 3 month outlook was provided. Longer range outlooks show increased chances of above normal wet season rainfall.

- Kissimmee Watershed Conditions by David Anderson, SFWMD.

Dr. Anderson presented information this item. The stage and regulation schedule for the year was reviewed. S-65 discharge for 2001-2005 vs. pre-regulation was shown on a graph. The snail kite nesting success was explained. A graph of stage recession in the Kissimmee River was shown. Hydroperiods on the flood plain has resulted, as well a habitats for several species. Concentration of dissolved oxygen in the River channel was also shown in a graph.

Currently, we begin the dry season with upper basin lakes at regulation schedules; discharge at S-65 is at the pre-channelization average for this time of year; and dissolved oxygen has recovered from summer low values.

Kevin Henderson spoke of running water down the Kissimmee River and asked a question on running more water to maintain the same levels. Dr. Anderson provided information on analysis that has been done on this issue. Mr. Henderson said he would be interested in any study that is done on this matter.

Walter Carson asked about monitoring of rainfall events and micro-impacts. Dr. Anderson reported on Doppler radar and data from individual range gauge sites. The entire Kissimmee Basin is being reviewed. Mr. Carson said that will be helpful and some more sophisticated data will be useful.

- Lake Okeechobee Conditions by Bruce Sharfstein, SFWMD.

Dr. Sharfstein provided information on this issue. The Lake levels were recovering from 2004 hurricanes. Heavy spring rains interrupted the spring recession. A wet summer and rains and runoff from Hurricane Wilma have brought the Lake to near 17' NGVD. Charts were shown on water quality following these conditions. Information on submerged aquatic vegetation, algal blooms exotics control, and bulrush was provided.

Don Fox of U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service was unable to attend this meeting, so Dr. Sharfstein provided information on fisheries.

The prognosis from December 2005 – May 2006 is for continued higher than environmentally desirable Lake levels; continued elevated turbidity and phosphorus levels; reoccurrence of severe algal blooms in spring and summer of 2006; continued decline in SAV distribution and density; and potential for extended severe impacts on the Lake fishery and on other wildlife.

Dr. Paul Gray asked questions about the torpedograss treatment area of 4,500 acres and Dr. Sharfstein gave an estimate of the area that has been treated and approximately 22,100 acres have been treated since 2000. Dr. Paul Gray asked if funding could be sought for additional treatment and he asked for a one-sheet estimate of what additional treatment would cost. Dr. Susan Gray responded on the issues discussed.

Martha Musgrove spoke of a rather large algae bloom that has occurred and she asked if it was comparable to a large algae bloom that occurred in the 1980s. Dr. Susan Gray said it was not comparable. Dr. Sharfstein provided additional information on algae blooms. Ms. Musgrove spoke of an extensive monitoring program that was done in the past. Dr. Susan Gray said staff members could try going back to review data.

- St. Lucie/Caloosahatchee Estuaries by Peter Doering, SFWMD.

Dr. Doering presented information from the last six months on this item. Information on Zone releases and discharges from June through November 2005 was provided. The performance measures for the Caloosahatchee River were given. The flow envelope for the Caloosahatchee River was shown in a graph. Presentation contained

information on salinity, grass, light extinction in the Caloosahatchee, performance measures, seagrass canopy, light and discharge, and other issues.

- Everglades Protection Area by Fred Sklar, SFWMD.

Mark Cook presented information on the ecological status of the Everglades from May through October 2005. (The handout was unavailable at the meeting, but will be posted to the SFWMD website, along with all other presentation handouts.)

Presentation contained information on the hydrologic performance measures for wading birds and tree islands; stage recorders; hydrologic recession trends in WCA-1, WCA-2A, WCA-2B, WCA-3A, WCA-3B, and the NE Shark River Slough. There has been a 41% decrease from 2004 in wading birds. The status of wading bird nests was provided.

The conclusions reached were explained. The forecast for the next six months was provided. If anyone is more interested in wading birds, a report produced by several agencies and universities is available.

Dr. Susan Gray spoke of the issues that are being presented today and they show the bad conditions that have been in existence during the last year.

- Stormwater Treatment Areas by Kathy Pietro, SFWMD.

Ms. Pietro presented information on this item. The layout of the STAs was shown on a map and Ms. Pietro reviewed each STA project in detail.

The effects of Hurricane Wilma on physical facilities and vegetation were presented. In summary, the STAs have removed about 700 metric tons of phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades. STA-1E passed permit start-up test for western and central flow ways and discharges have commenced. STA enhancements are underway to achieve phosphorus criterion of 10 ppb in the Everglades.

Kevin Henderson asked about the high inflows in some STAs. Ms. Pietro provided information and said the results from recent hurricanes and other runoffs, and no Lake water is in STA-1. Mr. Henderson asked what the flow rates are and Ms. Pietro gave information on the design of STAs and flow rates. Dr. Susan Gray provided additional information. The South Florida Environmental Report will provide more data and this report can be accessed from the District's website.

Patrick Hayes asked about volume of water being treated annually and Ms. Pietro said over 1 million acre feet of water has been treated.

Dr. Paul Gray asked questions on the effects from hurricanes and the recovery period. Ms. Pietro gave information on this issue. Dr. Paul Gray provided additional information. Dr. Paul Gray asked for an analysis and Dr. Susan Gray said Chip

Merriam is working on this matter. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed team was discussed.

- Climate/Hydrologic Outlook by Luis Cadavid, SFWMD.

Dr. Susan Gray provided introductory comments.

Dr. Cadavid presented information on this issue. He recognized several staff members who have assisted with data for the presentation. Climate forecasting was explained. The current sea surface temperature anomalies were shown on a graph. Information on El Nino and La Nina was given.

Topics discussed included the effects on Lake Okeechobee during the dry season was presented on a graph. The evolution of sea surface temperature; recent evolution of equatorial pacific SST departures; IRI probabilistic ENSO forecasts; Atlantic multi-decadal oscillation; correlation of March through April precipitation with the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation; rainfall tercile probability by season; climate outlook; current CPC outlook; hydrologic outlook via position analysis; chart showing the Lake Okeechobee SFWMM November 2005 position analysis; and simulated Lake Okeechobee stages with position analysis.

In summary, likely scenario: continuation of AMO positive. ENSO is currently neutral, but may develop into a negative condition. Need to monitor the possible changes to this scenario. ENSO neutral: 2nd half dry season above normal. ENSO negative: 2nd half dry season below normal.

Dr. Susan Gray provided additional information on this issue and on weather predictions.

Dr. Paul Gray asked about the simulations and Dr. Cadavid gave information on exit strategies and on deviations to the current schedule. Dr. Susan Gray said the reports are run every month and the deviations are incorporated.

Kevin Henderson also asked about deviation of the schedule.

- Water Supply Outlook by Peter Kwiatkowski, SFWMD.

Mr. Kwiatkowski presented information on performance measures. Conclusions on all water supply risk evaluation indicators are low and the current position analysis indicates right of moving is low.

- Regional Status Reports – FWCC by FWCC Staff. – No presentation.

3. Next Six Months: WSE Implementation Strategy by Susan Gray, SFWMD; and Andrew Geller, Corps of engineers

Dr. Susan Gray summarized the presentations today and stated that they have provided a good overview of the ecosystem and showed that there has been significant damage. Recovery will continue for the next year and now staff must determine what will be done for the next six months. The USACOE's actions were explained. The Lake ecology is very poor. The USACOE is the decision-maker on all Lake releases.

Mr. Geller reported on the current regulation schedule. All comments were due today, November 30th, on the schedule. All the ecosystems are the worst they have ever been. The current regulation schedule on the water supply environment was approved in July 2000 and is a flexible schedule.

Information on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the EIS process was provided. Presentation contained information on discharges, runoff, local flooding, and other issues.

Question from stakeholder, Joette Lorian: S-12 Gate is closed and the S-12 gate will close no matter how high the water is? Mr. Geller reported on the four S-12 schedules. Ms. Lorian, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians, asked further question on S-12 and the size of the discharges.

Mr. Geller reported on current conditions and the process for moving forward. Deviations will probably continue. The goal is to get the Lake back to 14 feet by May 1, 2006.

Frank Marsocci spoke of the 16 ¼ benchmark and temporary deviations and asked what the basis was for the 16 ¼. Mr. Geller supplied additional information.

Martha Musgrove asked about a comment made by Mr. Geller about "... adopting a plan without all these deviations." and what he means by that? She asked about an email from the Colonel to Nat Reed that said there were no deviations. Mr. Geller provided information on what deviations are allowed and under what circumstances. General discussion held on "deviations" to the schedule.

Dr. Paul Gray asked for clarification of the what the deviation schedule will be and Mr. Geller reported on the working plan. The plan has not been approved yet. Dr. Paul Gray expressed his concept of the plan.

Kevin Henderson expressed his point of view on behalf of the St. Lucie Initiative. We need to lose all the water we can as safely as we can until we give the Lake the chance to recover.

Dr. Paul Gray said he would like to have a deviation that allowed for continued lowering of the Lake. Dr. Susan Gray gave information on the deviation schedule.

Jody Thomas asked about obstacles to the deviation plan and Mr. Geller said a final plan is not made and the USACOE is taking all comments. The EIS process must be followed.

General discussion held on deviation of the current schedule.

Frank Marsocci spoke on opportunities for lowering the water level in the Lake. There has been no "wet" hurricane and when that does happen there will be major problems. Mr. Geller gave information on discharge history.

Dr. Paul Gray provided comment on the pro-active approach that was recently taken and he appreciated that.

Herb Zebuth, representing the Friends of the Everglades, made comments and questions on the presentations made today. He asked for clarification on where the evaluations were done in WCA-1, and Dr. Susan Gray and Mark Cook provided information. The South Florida Ecosystem Report would provide further information. Mr. Zebuth asked about erosion of Tree Islands and Mr. Cook gave information. Mr. Zebuth asked about the conversion of marsh STAs and he asked how that conversion occurs, and Kathy Pietro provided the requested information. Mr. Zebuth asked about the soil condensation rates and other matters and Ms. Pietro provided the information on soil cores, tissue analysis, flock material, etc. Dr. Susan Gray gave additional information.

Mark Perry, representing the Florida Oceanographic Society, commented on the data points on the Caloosahatchee and not so many on the St. Lucie. A lot more data is being collected in the estuary. Releases to get the Lake lower by May are a good thing and he is in favor of that. Level 1 pulse releases is needed. Dr. Susan Gray provided additional information.

Patrick Hayes said the Marine Sanctuary is looking into this matter.

Rick Smith said there was a request made to have the next meeting on the east coast instead of Ft. Myers (January 25, 2006). He will poll all the committee members to determine the location.

4. Public Comment and Discussion Led by Susan Gray.

Dr. Susan Gray said a copy of all the handouts will be posted to the SFWMD websites.

Adjourn – 5:00 p.m.

Lennart Lindahl
Chair

Water Resources Advisory Commission
Lake Okeechobee Committee

Recorded By:

Paula Moree
Staff Business Operations Analyst
Governing Board and Executive Services
SFWMD